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Thousands to march in Memphis on anniversary of King's slaying

By The Associated Press

Thousands of persons are to march in downtown Memphis on Tuesday in what is expected to be largest observance in the country of the 10th anniversary of the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

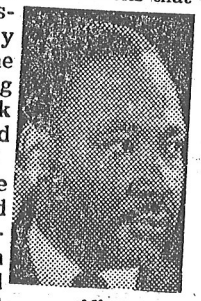
The march, sponsored by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 1733, is one of several activities in Memphis and other cities marking the date the civil rights leader was shot on a motel balcony while in Memphis in support of a sanitation strike.

James Earl Ray pleaded guilty to killing King and is serving a 99-year sentence at Brushy Mountain State Prison at Petros. He later recanted his confession.

The Rev. James Lawson, a leader of the 1968 sanitation workers strike and now pastor of Holman United Methodist Church in Los Angeles, will lead the commemoration in Memphis.

In Atlanta, Coretta King, the civil rights leader's widow, Martin Luther King Sr., and other members of the family, will lay a wreath on King's tomb. A family spokesman said a brief statement will be issued.

A march was planned in Gadsden, Ala., to honor King and to bring attention to demands among some blacks that six policemen be suspended. A county grand jury cleared the six in the fatal shooting of a 27-year-old black following a high-speed chase.



King

A memorial tribute was held in Cleveland at the City Hall rotunda on Monday, and an ecumenical memorial service was scheduled for Tuesday at the Trinity Episcopal Church. All of the city's more than 800 clergymen were invited for the service Tuesday to be conducted by Bishop John H. Burt of the Episcopal Diocese of Cleveland.

The observances in Memphis were scheduled to begin Monday night with a service at the Mason Temple Church of God in Christ Church, where King delivered his last speech. From there, a group will march to the Lorraine Motel, where King was shot, for a 24-hour vigil beginning at midnight Monday.

The downtown march was to begin at the Clayborn Temple AME Church at noon and last about four hours.

High school students from Memphis and Shelby County were invited to a rally Tuesday morning at the Cook Convention Center in memory of King's life and work. The Rev. Jesse Jackson, director of Operation PUSH, was to address the rally, sponsored by PUSH, WHBQ radio, and First Tennessee Bank. Memphis State University also scheduled "A Tribute to Martin Luther King Jr."

No official city or county observance was planned in Memphis, but public employees were permitted to use a day of sick leave, annual leave or bonus leave to take part.